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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0151
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0161
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0634
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0450
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0158
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0317
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0536
RUEHVN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2456
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1843
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000386

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATIONS BEGIN; POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS?

REF: A. BISHKEK 384
[¶](#)B. BISHKEK 284

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Felix Kulov's United Front continues to move forward with plans for an open-ended anti-government demonstration in Bishkek starting on April 11. In several northern regions of the country, smaller demonstrations were staged on April 9, and in Bishkek, over 100 United Front supporters continued their hunger strike in front of parliament. Publicly, Kulov has said that the protests will continue until President Bakiyev steps down and calls early presidential elections; other United Front leaders have indicated that any negotiations would require President Bakiyev's direct involvement. We understand that the government is considering a new draft constitution that, if President Bakiyev agrees, could serve as the basis for direct talks with the opposition as soon as April 10. Kulov has his own suggestion for a way forward. However, supporters on both sides continue to push for a hard line. END SUMMARY.

Demonstrations in the Regions

[¶](#)2. (SBU) As the opposition United Front moved forward with plans for a "termless" protest rally in Bishkek starting April 11, there were several smaller one-day rallies around the country on April 9. For the most part, the rallies occurred in the northern provinces, with no rallies reported in the largely pro-Bakiyev southern oblasts of Osh or Batken, and one rally reported in Jalalabad. There were no reports of clashes or disturbances, and government officials

addressed some of the rallies. In Karakol, for example, approximately 700 people gathered and set up yurts; Issyk Kul oblast governor Isayev addressed the protesters and said he was prepared to find ways to resolve outstanding issues. In Naryn, around 200 protesters set up yurts in the central square, but by the afternoon they were dismantling them and preparing to head to Bishkek for the April 11 demonstration. In Talas, where the protest also involves issues concerning the Jerooy gold mine, over 1000 demonstrators have said they will continue their action during the coming days.

Hunger Strike Continues

¶3. (SBU) Approximately 100 United Front supporters, including MP Melis Eshimkanov, began a hunger strike in front of the parliament building in Bishkek on April 5. The protesters set up nine yurts, and the protest continued through the weekend. At least five of the protesters claimed they were ready to set themselves on fire to protest Bakiyev's "unwillingness to implement constitution reforms." Both Prime Minister Atambayev and United Front leader Kulov visited briefly with the hunger strikers. The hunger strikers will reportedly shift their protest to the central Ala-Too Square when the main protest begins there on April 11.

Back to the November Constitution?

¶4. (C) Ambassador met April 9 with former Foreign Minister Murat Imanaliyev and analyst Valentin Bogatyrev. Imanaliyev and Bogatyrev thought there was still a chance that Bakiyev and Kulov would reach a compromise -- or at least begin negotiations -- before demonstrations began in Bishkek April 11. Bogatyrev had met with Kulov over the past weekend, and

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said Kulov told him he was ready to talk to Bakiyev, but he was waiting for an invitation from Bakiyev and some clarity about what they would talk about. Bogatyrev said that, despite the public rhetoric, Kulov now favored a way forward that would possibly leave Bakiyev in place but shift all authority for forming the government to the parliament, at least in the near term. Under this scenario, the parliament would repeal the law adopting the December version of the constitution, bringing back the November version for an extended transition period. According to the November constitution, the parliament would choose the prime minister and form the government; the president would have no role in forming the government. The parliament would then be pressured (or bought) to pick Kulov to run the government for the transition period until a final new constitution was adopted. Bogatyrev said that Kulov was ready to move forward with this plan and present it to parliament on April 11 and was confident of success.

Atambayev's Draft Constitution?

¶5. (C) On April 5, Prime Minister Atambayev formed an 11-member constitutional working group with both government and opposition representatives. Headed by Atambayev, the group includes MP Azimbek Beknazarov, former Foreign Minister Roza Otunbayeva, MP Iskhak Masaliyev, and Director of the Institute for Constitutional Policy Nurlan Sadikov. Bogatyrev said that the group had already prepared a new draft constitution, and -- if the president approves -- the draft could serve as the basis for discussions with Kulov as early as April 10. In addition, or alternatively, the draft could go to parliament for consideration as soon as April 11.
(Note: The constitutional working group announced that it will hold a press conference on April 10. End Note.)

¶6. (C) Bogatyrev said the spin masters at the White House would today release film of the hunger strikers eating. On April 10, the president will make a "harsh" statement about

the political situation. He stated that the only discussion at the Kyrgyz White House was how harsh the statement should be, and State Secretary Madumarov was instrumental in ratcheting up the rhetoric. Imanaliyev expressed regret that Bakiyev was incapable of compromise, as he sees it as a sign of weakness. Both of our interlocutors agreed that Kulov and Bakiyev are prisoners of their respective entourages, which are urging both men to take a tough stand.

National Guard Not to Arm for Demonstrations; Bogatyrev Believes Violence "Probable"

¶7. (C) On April 9, Ambassador also met National Guard Commander Gen. Asanbeek Alymkojoyev to discuss the planned opposition demonstrations in Bishkek April 11. She stressed, as she has in all other meetings, that both sides should act with restraint. She said that the actions of the protesters and the government security forces should be constitutional, lawful, and non-violent. Alymkojoyev said that the National Guard (which is responsible for the grounds outside the Kyrgyz White House) would act with restraint. He said that the National Guard forces would not be armed; they would carry only shields and rubber batons. Bogatyrev, on the other hand, noted that there are small groups on both sides that are arming themselves and ready for confrontation. He said there would "probably" be bloodshed, although this was most likely not the intent of either leader.

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Comment

¶8. (C) While Imanaliyev and Bogatyrev outlined two possible near-term scenarios that would lead to negotiations ahead of the planned demonstration in Bishkek, they both expressed concern that hardliners in each camp were pushing toward a confrontation. They were somewhat dismissive of the efforts of PM Atambayev, saying that he was protecting his own interests and encouraging a hard-line approach. They also said Bakiyev was using Atambayev as a political counterbalance to Kulov, not as a genuine bridge to the opposition. Discussion continues, and it is possible that a draft constitution could serve as the basis for talks between the president and the opposition, but several pieces would have to fall in place quickly if the April 11 demonstration is to be averted. It also looks likely that the parliament may play a large role if Bakiyev and Kulov cannot work out an agreement.

YOVANOVITCH